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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 000963

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SUBJECT: SUDAN/AMIS RE-HATting: FRENCH ON BOARD, YET FACE
BUDGETARY HURDLE

REF: SECSTATE 22854

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Bruce I. Turner. Reasons 1.4
b,d

11. (C) Summary: Visiting IO/PSC Director Anderson and Embassy Africa Watcher shared the non-paper on AMIS re-hatting with the French Presidency and the MFA, encouraging France to engage in a complementary effort with AU partners (reftel). Presidential Advisor Labriolle maintained France was on the same page -- "completely" -- as the USG. He deferred to the MFA IO bureau to address modalities of the transition. IO Acting A/S-Equivalent Lacroix again confirmed French agreement on the need for AMIS transition while explaining that the MFA was grappling with the implications of newly-instituted French parliamentary budget rules. The MFA would need to demonstrate close oversight of the DPKO planning process in order to justify a supplementary budgetary request. MFA AF DAS-Equivalent for the Horn Le Gal again confirmed France favored AMIS re-hatting and expressed optimism that the EU, the USG and other donor states were working out agreements to bridge the funding gap until a formal UN transition. End Summary.

12. (C) France was "completely" on the same page as the USG on AMIS re-hatting, Jacques de Labriolle, deputy to Chirac's Africa Counselor Michel de Bonnacorse, affirmed February 13 to Visiting IO/PSC Director Gerry Anderson and Embassy Africa Watcher. He deferred to the MFA IO bureau to address modalities of the transition; but he declared emphatically there was no question about French support.

13. (C) In MFA meetings there were no doubts expressed as to the appropriateness and inevitability of AMIS re-hatting. Acting A/S Equivalent Lacroix, who was joined by DAS-Equivalent Jean-Hughes Simon-Michel and desk officers Clement Leclerc and German exchange diplomat Thomas Zahneisen, treated the principle of re-hatting as a given. Lacroix explained however that the MFA was wrestling with the implications of new parliamentary budgetary rules that had come into effect with the financial year beginning January 1. The MFA had lost its previous flexibility for authorizing peacekeeping missions at whatever point in the budgetary cycle. As a consequence, to cover the new PKO cost for Darfur the MFA would either need to reprogram extant funds ("and shut between fifteen to twenty embassies") or else return to Parliament (meaning both the National Assembly and the Senate) to seek a kind of budget "supplemental" -- an unprecedented step. The MFA had to prepare domestic interlocutors and lay the groundwork for the likely request, Lacroix stressed. To that end, France wanted strict UNSC

oversight of DPKO planning to ensure an efficient mission.
(Note: Leclerc later reiterated to Africa Watcher the complete support of France for AMIS re-hatting, calling the comments of Labriolle at the French presidency authoritative. He did admit that the MFA's current budgetary bind may have an impact on the timetable for transition.)

¶4. (C) AF DAS-Equivalent for the Horn of Africa Helen Le Gal treated AMIS re-hatting as established policy. She expressed optimism that the EU, together with the U.S. and other partners, would soon agree to respective donor packages that would ensure continuous funding to AMIS during the transition. Locking down the bridging funds would also convey a message to the AU that the tenure of AMIS was now clearly finite, she observed.

¶5. (C) Comment: France concurs unequivocally on AMIS re-hatting. Moreover, our February 13 meetings saw no mention of a need to further assuage AU sensibilities before moving forward on the transition. However, the MFA is fretting over new bureaucratic constraints comparable, in the French view, to U.S. procedures for Congressional Notification for peacekeeping authorizations. The likelihood of sticker shock for a UN Darfur mission is also a factor. French calls for disciplining DPKO planning on Darfur do not constitute furtive attempts at sabotage. While it is probable that there would be less gnashing of teeth at the MFA if the extra peacekeeping commitment were for priority crises in Francophone Africa, this is partly because that would be an easier sell to the French Parliament. In any case, the MFA remains faced by a technical and bureaucratic challenge which will influence the comportment of the French delegation in New York. The ensuing effort to audit DPKO

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planning on Darfur could introduce delays, at least initially, in negotiations on AMIS re-hatting.

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Stapleton